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TAGS: [CH](#) [KN](#) [KS](#) [PARM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)  
SUBJECT: SHANGHAI PERSPECTIVES ON FORMER PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON'S  
TRIP TO NORTH KOREA

CLASSIFIED BY: Beatrice Camp, Consul General, U.S. Consulate  
General, Shanghai, Department of State.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Meetings with Shanghai scholars and commentaries in local papers suggest many in East China believe the nuclear issue was the main topic of discussion during former President Bill Clinton's August 4-5 trip to North Korea. Shanghai scholars expressed hope that the visit would kick start stalled negotiations over the DPRK's nuclear program and create a channel for U.S.-North Korean dialogue. Kim Jong-il's participation in the meetings signaled to the outside world that Kim is still in charge in North Korea, the scholars said. End Summary.

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Nuclear Issue Believed to be Focus of Discussions  
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¶2. (C) Former President Bill Clinton's visit to Pyongyang generated intense interest in East China. Xue Chen, Research Fellow at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS), said August 7 that he believes Kim Jong-il and President Clinton discussed North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Kim probably explained to Clinton what the North Koreans want in order to move forward on the nuclear issue, Xue said, adding the normalization of U.S.-DPRK ties as the bottom line.

¶3. (C) Xue said the participation in the talks of North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye Gwan, who met Clinton at the airport and attended all of the meetings, was probably significant. Kim's role as the lead negotiator for the Six-Party talks adds weight to the idea that the nuclear issue was discussed, Xue stated. During the meetings, Kim would have certainly been an active contributor when the nuclear issue was broached, he surmised.

¶4. (C) Xue believes the meeting between Kim and Clinton began an unofficial channel for dialogue between the United States and North Korea. Now, if the North Koreans desire to send a message to President Obama and Secretary Clinton in the future, they may send it via the former president, Xue said.

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Commentary in the Local Media  
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15. (SBU) In an interview published August 5 in Shanghai's popular Chinese language Oriental Morning Post newspaper, Fudan University Center for American Studies Director Shen Dingli stated the real strategic purpose of President Clinton's trip was North Korea's nuclear program. In a separate article in the August 5 edition of the Chinese language Wen Hui Bao newspaper, Shen added that Clinton's visit to the DPRK was significant because it "opened a bilateral dialogue" between the United States and North Korea. Shen wrote he believes a U.S.-North Korean bilateral dialogue would take place in the near term, but that it would probably occur on the sidelines of the Six-Party talks. In both articles, Shen explained the trip highlighted that U.S.-North Korean relations are improving.

16. (C) Shen added in the Wen Hui Bao commentary that, by meeting personally with Clinton, Kim Jong-il wanted to show the world that he is still in control in North Korea despite rumors about his health. Xue agreed with Shen's perspective, telling PolOff that in his view, "aside from having lost a considerable amount of weight, Kim looks generally well."

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Trip Not Leaked Beforehand  
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17. (C) Xue reported that the meeting was unknown to Chinese academics at SIIS until Japanese press reports were published online. He continued that if, in fact, the Chinese government had been notified of the trip in advance, the information was not leaked outside the top leadership circle.

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